



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2016

No. 28

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord, You are great and highly to be praised. Make Yourself known in the hearts and minds of our lawmakers. May Your presence create in them a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Help them to see the opportunities that reside in their challenges, as thoughts of Your steadfast love sustain them throughout life's seasons.

May their lips speak of Your wisdom and the meditations of their hearts earn Your sacred approval. Lord, give them the wisdom to remember how fragile life is and that when we die we leave our possessions to others. When our Senators call on You in the day of trouble, deliver them with Your mighty hands.

And, Lord, touch Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL with Your healing hands.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT CALIFF

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, at a time when the prescription drug opioid epidemic is tearing families and com-

munities apart in our country, it is clear we need strong leadership at the FDA. This is an agency that can play a leading role in addressing the crisis through its drug-approval process, but it is also an agency that has been rightly criticized for not recognizing the severity of such a significant problem and for not taking greater action to address it.

Today we will consider the nomination of someone who I think can help lead the agency in a new direction. I recently met with Dr. Califf and raised my concerns and desire for the FDA to take a more assertive role in addressing this serious epidemic. He shared with me his proposed plan for dealing with the issue and for establishing a necessary cultural shift over the agency. I plan to support his nomination today, and I look forward to working with him.

That said, I have proudly led many efforts over the years to push the FDA to take a stronger approach when it comes to ending today's prescription opioid epidemic. I don't plan to let up now. The FDA should expect continuous, rigorous oversight in the way the agency addresses this epidemic in the future.

GUANTANAMO DETAINEES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we understand that in just a few minutes the President is set to make an announcement on the secure facility in Guantanamo. In light of that, colleagues should consider the following things we have heard in recent weeks.

General Dunford has spoken of the need for our military to take more aggressive action against the ISIL group that is operating inside Libya.

General Campbell has spoken of the need to retain a sizable enough force in Afghanistan to accomplish the dual missions of both conducting counterterrorism operations and training and advising the Afghan security forces.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has issued a budget request that seeks funding for the weapons systems and programs we will need to balance against the regional ambitions of China and Russia.

In other words, some of the most senior national security officials within this administration are already working to better position the next President for the national security challenges we will face in 2017 and beyond. Yet President Obama seems to remain captured on one matter by a campaign promise he made in 2008—his ill-considered crusade to close the secure detention facility at Guantanamo.

Today we received the descriptions of where the President would like to detain terrorists within the United States—though not any actual proposed locations—despite the fact that it would be illegal under current law to transfer foreign terrorists at Guantanamo into the United States. This isn't a case where the President can even try to justify the use of some pen-and-phone strategy by claiming Congress failed to act. To the contrary, Congress acted over and over again in a bipartisan way to reject the President's desire to transfer dangerous terrorists to communities in the United States. The President signed all these prohibitions and his Attorney General recently confirmed that it is illegal for the President to transfer any of these terrorists into the United States.

We will review President Obama's plan, but since it includes bringing dangerous terrorists to facilities in U.S. communities, he should know that the bipartisan will of Congress has already been expressed against that proposal.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the signs of the season are all around us. Volunteers are knocking on doors,

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S925